**SOCIALIZATION**

**DEFINITIONS:**

Macionis: Socialization refers to the lifelong social experience by which people develop their human potential and learn culture.

W.F.Ogburn: “Socialization is the process by which the individual learns to conform to the norms of the group.”

Peter Worsley explains socialization as the process of transmission of culture, the process whereby men learn the rules and practices of social groups.

Finally we can say that the process of adjustment in social environment is called socialization.

Helpless at birth, the human infant depends on others to provide nourishment and care. Human infants are the most helpless of all; a human child cannot survive unaided for at least four or five years of life. It is a matter of survival of human child; and then to transform the human child into a social being he needs interaction with other members of human society without which learning capacity is lost. This process of transformation is socialization.

**NATURE:** **Nature refers to the things that are inborn, inherited from parents e.g. eye color, hair color.**

Nature implies contribution of heredity to the human beings which may include physical characteristics, and what is inside the human body. Physical and psychological characteristics can be transmitted through heredity. Whatever is being transmitted through heredity may be considered as human potential given by nature.

**NURTURE: Nurture are the things that are learned through the process of socialization.**

In 20th century, biological explanation of human behavior were challenged. It was assumed that much of human behavior was not instinctive. Rather it was learned.

This does not mean that biology plays no part in human behavior. We know that children often share biological trait with their parents and heredity also plays an important part in intelligence and personality. E.g. if a children is intelligent it may be his nature but his social economic factors decide whether he will be successful or not like his schooling. (nurture)

**IMPORTNACE OF SOCIALIZATION:**

The importance of socialization in our life can hardly be exaggerated. The following description makes it very clear.

**1. Socialization converts man, the biological being into man, the social being.**

Man is not born social; He becomes social by virtue of the process of socialization. In the absence of groups or society the human beings is merely an individual without culture. To support this view, a case of child not socialized and who have never bear contacts with human beings are presented below.

In 1932, Anna was born in an illegitimate relationship. Her mother was mentally handicapped and her grandfather who was ashamed of this illegitimate child. Since birth she was locked up and left isolated with what was sufficiently enough to keep her alive. Five years later, the young girl was discovered by a social worker and here are the exact feelings of the latter: "*...Anna was wedged into an old chair with her arms tied above her head so that she couldn't move. She was wearing filthy clothes, and her arms and legs were as thin as matchsticks...she stayed day after day, month after month with almost no human contact and could not laugh, speak or even smile. She was completely unresponsive.*" after her discovery, Anna was looked after and made some progress like learning to feed herself, to speak a few sentences and dress herself but unfortunately she died three years after her discovery.

**2. Socialization contributes to the development of personality.**

Personality is a product of society. In the absence of groups or society, no man can develop a personality of his own. But socialization is a process through which the personality of the new born child is shaped and molded. Through the process, the child learns an approved way of social life. At the same time, it also provides enough scope for the individual to develop his individuality.

**3. Helps to became disciplined.**

Socialization is social learning. Social learning is essentially the learning of rules of social behavior. It is the values, ideals, aims and objectives of life and the means of attaining them. Socialization disciplines an individual and helps him to live according to the social expectations.

**4. Helps to enact different roles.**

Every individual has to enact different roles in his life. Every role is woven around norms and is associated with different attitudes. The process of socialization assists an individual not only to learn the norms associated with roles but also to develop appropriate attitudes to enact those roles.

**5. Provides the knowledge of skills.**

Socialization is a way of training the newborn individual in certain skills, which are required to lead a normal social life. These skills help the individual to play economic, professional, educational, religious and political roles in his latter life. In primitive societies for, example, imparting skills to the younger generation in specific occupations was an important aspect of socialization.

**6. Helps to develop right aspiration in life.**

Every individual may have his own aspirations; ambitions and desires in life. All these aspirations may not always be in consonance with the social interests. Some of them even be opposed to the communal interests. But through the process of socialization an individual learns to develop those aspirations. Which are complementary to the interests of society. Socialization helps him to direct or channelize his whole energy for the realization of those aspirations.

**7. Contributes to the stability of the social order.**

It is through the process of socialization that every new generation is trained according to the cultural goals, ideals, and expectations of a society. It assures the cultural continuity of the society. At the same time, it provides enough scope for variety and new achievements. Every new generation need not start its social life a fresh. It can conveniently rely on the earlier generation and follow in cultural traditions. In this regard, socialization contributes to the stability of the social order.

**8. Helps to reduce social distance.**

Socialization reduces social distance and brings people together if proper attention is given to it. By giving proper training and guidance to the children during their early years, it is possible to reduce the social distance between people of different castes, races, regions, religions and professions.

**9. Vital for sex role differentiation:**

When they are born, men are either male or female. This is an irreversible biological fact. But society gives a social construction of maleness and femaleness or masculinity and feminity through the socialization process. This is called gender since it is cultural and contextually defined. The focus in the concept of gender is that the differences in masculinity and feminity have little to do with biological differences, at the exception of some obvious ones like women alone can give birth and breastfeed their infants. Nonetheless, society constructs a typical identity for man and women through the socialization process.

For instance, Huston (1983) found that patterns of sex roles socialization are revealed that in the earliest days of an infant's life. It is not simply an infant but a boy or a girl. Boys are dressed differently from girls, their rooms are decorated in such a way that they reflect their gender and they are provided with toys and activities that attach meaning to their gender although these are not biologically programmed. Moreover, the growing child learns to categorize things, activities and events according to their gender by simply using their parents as role models and imitating them. One example of this can be copying the gendered division of labor that takes place at home, learning sex stereotypes through conversations and behaviors of parents towards each other’s.

When the child reaches school age, this gendered socialization continues through the hidden curriculum and teachers' expectations. Boys and girls are channeled in different subjects and are given different attentions. This results in streaming males and females in traditional careers that in turns fulfill the expectations of mainstream societal values about gender.

**10. Creates social control:**

Individual behavior is controlled by socialization. He learn to do something or not to do something i.e. social control. E.g. mass media through certain religious programs tell what the right path is. The political talk shows pinpoint the exact behavior and tell us the truth. Media also creates social control by motivating the people by playing patriotic songs and national anthem.

**WHAT DOES SOCIALIZATION TEACH US?**

* Language
* Culture (Norms, Values, beliefs, etc)
* Understanding of others.
* Understanding of ourselves as a social being or “social self”.
* Emergence of a “Social Self”

**Formal & Informal Socialization**

* Formal Socialization: Socialization conducted by formally organized social groups and institutions, like schools, religious centers, mass media, universities, work place, military training centers, etc.
* Informal Socialization: Socialization which is carried through informal social interactions and relationships at micro-level, at inter-personal and small social group levels.

**AGENTS OF SOCIALIZATION**

Socialization agents are the sources from which we learn about society and ourselves. Agents of socialization are the individuals, groups and institutions that create the social context in which socialization takes place. It is through agents of socialization that individuals learn and incorporate the values and norms of their culture as well as their various positions in the social structure in such terms as class, race and gender.

**Family**

**Family** is usually considered to be the most important agent of socialization. As infants, we are completely dependent on others to survive. When we are born, our primary caregivers are almost always one or both of our parents. For several years we have more contact with them than with any other adults. Because this contact occurs in our most formative years, our parents’ interaction with us and the messages they teach us can have a profound impact throughout our lives. For several years, at least until children begin school, the family also has the job of teaching children skills, values, and beliefs. Research suggests, nothing is more likely to produce a happy, well-adjusted child than being in a loving family.

Through the family, parents give a social identity to children. Social class position like race, plays a large part in shaping a child’s responsibility. The class position of parents affects how they raise their children. Class position shapes not just how much money. Parents have to spend, but what they expect of their children. In the lower class there is lot of emphasis on Conformity and obedience. The children are told "Don't get into trouble." There is more use of physical punishment in lower class than in other classes. People of lower class standing usually have limited education and perform routine jobs under close supervision. They expect their children will hold similar positions, so they encourage obedience. Well-off parents, with more schooling, usually have jobs that demand imagination and creativity. They try to inspire the same qualities in their children.

## Education/Schools

Education is the most important agent of socialization after the family.

Schooling enlarges children’s social world to include people with backgrounds different from their own which make them understand the importance of factors such as race, culture social class etc. Schools are the first impersonal and collective environment that children encounter. Whereas schools’ official function is the transmission of knowledge, they also promote certain values – honesty, competition, respect and individualism – and norms, such as not cheating on tests or being punctual or not arguing with teachers. Children also learn to deal with authority figures other than their parents and with peers. Also, for the first time, schools introduce students to impersonal assessment of their abilities through grades and official records that will follow the students throughout their educational career.

Schools join with families in socializing children into gender roles. As at schools, boys engage in more physical activities and spend more time outdoors, and girls are more likely to help teachers with various housekeeping chores. Boys also engage in more aggressive behavior in classroom, while girls are typically quieter and better behaved.

## Peer Group

## A social group whose members have interests, social positions and age in common.

Among peers children learn how to develop relation on their own. Peer groups also offer the chance to discuss interests that adults may not share with their children (such as clothing and music) or permit (such as drugs, sex). That’s why parents express concern about who their children’s friends are. The attitudes of young and old may differ because of a "generation gap." The importance of peer groups typically peaks during adolescence, when young people begin to break away from their families and think of themselves as adult

## Our friends play a very important role in our lives. This is especially true during adolescence, when peers influence our tastes in music, clothes, and so many other aspects of our lives, as the now common image of the teenager always on a cell phone reminds us. But friends are important during other parts of the life course as well. We rely on them for fun, for emotional comfort and support, and for companionship.

Neighborhood and schools provide a variety of peer groups. Individuals tend to view their own group in positive terms and to discredit others. People are also influenced by peer groups they would like to join, a process sociologists call anticipatory socialization, learning that helps a person achieve a desired position.

## Mass Media

The mass media are impersonal communication aimed at a vast audience. Mass media arise as communication technology (first the newspapers and then radio, television, films, and the Internet) spreads information on a mass scale. The mass media have an enormous effect on our attitudes and behavior, and on shaping people's .opinions about issues as well as what they buy.

## Although the mass media is perceived as empowering us with wider information, knowledge about the wider world, it becomes clear that it also harms its audience and receivers. By concentrating and stressing on certain topics, the media can create, manage and control our impressions of what should be seen as real, important and normative. For instance, some research done have shown that there is a strong correlation between violent television shows and aggressive anti-social behavior among children, since the latter like to copy their favorite heroes (Globe and Mail, May 20, 1993). Another contemporary threat is the internet. Although, it can be used as a pool/reservoir of knowledge, the internet constitutes a danger for children since they can be easily exposed to certain damaging material.